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A WONDERFUL GHOST STORY

Being

Mr. H's Own Narrative

A RECITAL OF FACTS

With Unpublished Letters

FROM

CHARLES DICKENS

Respecting it

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A WONDERFUL GHOST STORY.

LETTERS FROM CHARLES DICKENS HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED.

GAD'S HILL PLACE,
HIGHAM-BY-ROCHESTER, KENT,
SUNDAY, *Sept.* 15*th*, 1861.

DEAR SIR,

ALLOW me to express to you the sincere regret I feel that your most remarkable story (which I have read with great interest) should have been innocently forestalled in the pages of my journal. At the same time, I must add that your own version of the experience is so very curious, and so much

more striking than the account sent to me, that I shall be happy to publish it in *All the Year Round*, if you should feel disposed to entrust it to me for that purpose.

I received the story published in that journal first among the "Four Ghost Stories," from a gentleman of a distinguished position, both literary and social, who, I do not doubt, is well known to you by reputation. He did not send it to me as his own, but as the work of a young writer in whom he feels an interest, and who previously contributed (all through him) another ghost story. I will immediately let him know what

correspondence I have had with you, and you shall be made acquainted with the nature of his reply.

You may be quite certain, I feel sure, that there has been no betrayal of confidence on the part of any one connected with the magazine for whom you reserved your story. It must have been repeatedly told (though probably never correctly) in more circles than one. It happens that Mr Layard is staying here with me, and instantly recognised the version printed in *All the Year Round*, as *a* version of a story he heard at Sir Edward Lytton's, in Hertfordshire, some time since.

As I do not feel myself authorised in retaining your MS. without your consent I beg to return it herewith. But I am anxious to repeat my readiness to purchase it for publication in *All the Year Round*, as the authentic story. Its interest seems to me to be heightened, rather than impaired, by its having been imperfectly told.

Again expressing my regret that I should have been, however innocently and unconsciously, the cause of a moment's annoyance to you,

I am, dear Sir, faithfully yours,

CHARLES DICKENS.

THOMAS HEAPHY, ESQ.

GAD'S HILL PLACE,
HIGHAM-BY-ROCHESTER, KENT,
TUESDAY, *Sept.* 17*th*, 1861.

DEAR SIR,

I THINK I can show you in a very few words, not only that your lingering suspicion is groundless, but that everything associated with your strange experience would seem to be extraordinary. In the version I received and published, *there was no date.* All that was set down as to time was "late in

the autumn." When I came to revise the story in the proof for press, the need of some precise date was so clear to me, that I myself inserted on the margin of the proof the date you find in the published narrative. Why that date should have come into my head rather than any other, I am profoundly unable to say. Mr Layard remembers that it is more than a year since he heard Sir Edward Lytton tell the story, and he says he has a strong impression that he laid it on the table in writing. Moreover, Mr Layard is convinced that he has since seen it in print, though he cannot recollect where. I have written

to Sir Edward to ask him how he came by it. His answer will, no doubt, have an interest for you, and I will let you know the purport in due course. I read Mr Layard your own account, and he was quite clear in his remembrance that Sir Edward's version of it fell as far short as my contributor's does. I think it would be best to call it *Mr H——'s Own Narrative*, or *Mr H——'s Own Evidence*, and I will introduce it with a few lines referring to the version already printed, and calling attention to it as being the authentic story given at first-hand. There is no doubt that it ought to appear as soon after the wrong

version as possible. I will therefore place it in the number I shall make up to-morrow, which will be published to-morrow fortnight. I will send you a proof from the office in the course of to-morrow, and I must ask you to have the kindness to return it on Thursday, as we publish simultaneously in America and London, and the sheets go across the Atlantic by the next mail.

Dear sir, faithfully yours,

CHARLES DICKENS.

THOMAS HEAPHY, ESQ.

P.S.—I observed in your narrative that you mention the young lady's eating

the beef and drinking the claret. Do you remember whether the joint was placed on the table or carved on the sideboard? and whether you seemed to see the figure served as the three mortals were, or seemed to find it already carved without noticing the progress?

OFFICE OF "ALL THE YEAR ROUND,"

FRIDAY, *Sept.* 20*th*, 1861.

DEAR SIR,

MR LAYARD has not been able to remember where or when he saw some version of your story in print. Sir Edward Lytton received *his* version in writing from Mr Edward Ward. Sir Edward informs me that his version was very superior to that published here. I therefore suppose it is told nearer your own. He is searching for the MS., but

has not yet been able to lay his hand upon it.

Faithfully yours,

CHARLES DICKENS.

THOMAS HEAPHY, ESQ.

Extract, re "*Mr H.'s Own Narrative*," *from John Forster's "Life of Charles Dickens," vol. iii., page* 483.

"Among his good things (Charles Dickens') should not be omitted his telling of a ghost story. He had something of a hankering after them, as the readers of his briefer pieces well know; and such was his interest generally in things supernatural that, but for the strong restraining power of his common sense, he might have fallen into the follies of Spiritualism. As it was, the

fanciful side of his nature stopped short at such pardonable superstitions as those of dreams and lucky days, or other marvels of natural coincidence; and no man was readier to apply sharp tests to a ghost story or a haunted house, though there was just so much tendency to believe in any such 'well authenticated' as made perfect his manner of telling one. Such a story is related in the 125th number of *All the Year Round*, which before its publication both Mr Layard and myself saw at Gad's Hill, and identified as one related by Lord Lytton. It was published in September, and in a day or two led to what Dickens

will relate :—' The artist himself, who is the hero of that story (to Lord Lytton, 15th September 1861), has sent me in black and white his own account of the whole experience, so very original, so very extraordinary, so very far beyond the version I have published, that all other stories turn pale before it.'

"The ghost story thus reinforced came out in the number published on the 5th of October; and the reader who cares to turn to it and compare what Dickens in the interval (17th of September) wrote to myself will have some measure of his readiness to believe in such things. Upon the publication of

the ghost story up has started the portrait-painter who saw the phantoms! His own written story is out of all distance the most extraordinary that was ever produced, and is as far beyond my version of Bulwer's as Scott is beyond James. Everything connected with it is amazing, but conceive this — the portrait-painter had been engaged to write it elsewhere as a story for next Christmas, and not unnaturally supposed, when he saw himself anticipated in *All the Year Round*, that there had been treachery at his printers. 'In particular,' says he (Mr H.), 'how else was it possible that the date, the 13th of Septem-

ber, could have been got at? For I never told the date until I wrote it.' Now, *my* story had no date; but seeing when I looked over the proof, the great importance of having a date, I (C. D.) wrote in unconsciously the exact date on the margin of the proof."

MR H.'S OWN NARRATIVE.

THERE was lately published in *All the Year Round* a paper entitled FOUR STORIES. The first of those stories related the strange experience of "a well-known English artist, Mr H." On the publication of that account, Mr H. himself addressed the conductor of the above Journal (to his great surprise), and forwarded to him his own narrative of the occurrences in question.

As Mr H. wrote, without any con-

cealment, in his own name in full, and from his own studio in London, and as there was no possible doubt of his being a real existing person and a responsible gentleman, it became a duty to read his communication attentively. And great injustice having been unconsciously done to it, in the version published as the first of the "Four Stories," it follows here exactly as received. It is, of course, published with the sanction and authority of Mr H., and Mr H. has himself corrected the proofs.

Entering on no theory of our own towards the explanation of any part of this remarkable narrative, we have pre-

vailed on Mr H. to present it without any introductory remarks whatever. It only remains to add, that no one has for a moment stood between us and Mr H. in this matter. The whole communication is at first hand. On seeing the article, "Four Stories," Mr H. frankly and good-humouredly wrote, "I am the Mr H., the living man, of whom mention is made; how my story has been picked up, I do not know, but it is not correctly told; I have it by me, written by myself, and here it is."

A WONDERFUL GHOST STORY.

I AM a painter. One morning in May 1858, I was seated in my studio at my usual occupation. At an earlier hour than that at which visits are usually made, I received one from a friend whose acquaintance I had made some year or two previously in Richmond Barracks, Dublin. My acquaintance was a captain in the 3rd West York Militia, and from the hospitable manner in which I had been received while a guest with that regiment, as well as from the intimacy that

existed between us personally, it was incumbent on me to offer my visitor suitable refreshments; consequently, two o'clock found us well occupied in conversation, cigars, and a decanter of sherry. About that hour a ring at the bell reminded me of an engagement I had made with a model, or a young person who, having a pretty face and neck, earned a livelihood by sitting for them to artists. Not being in the humour for work, I arranged with her to come on the following day, promising, of course, to remunerate her for her loss of time, and she went away. In about five minutes she returned, and, speaking to

me privately, stated that she had looked forward to the money for the day's sitting and would be inconvenienced by the want of it; would I let her have a part? There being no difficulty on this point, she again went. Close to the street in which I live there is another of a very similar name, and persons who are not familiar with my address often go to it by mistake. The model's way lay directly through it, and, on arriving there, she was accosted by a lady and gentleman, who asked if she could inform them where I lived? They had forgotten my right address, and were endeavouring to find me by inquiring of

persons whom they met; in a few more minutes they were shown into my room.

My new visitors were strangers to me. They had seen a portrait I had painted, and wished for likenesses of themselves and their children. The price I named did not deter them, and they asked to look round the studio to select the style and size they should prefer. My friend of the 3rd West York, with infinite address and humour, took upon himself the office of showman, dilating on the merits of the respective works in a manner that the diffidence that is expected in a professional man, when speaking of his own productions, would not have allowed me

to adopt. The inspection proving satisfactory, they asked whether I could paint the pictures at their house in the country, and there being no difficulty on this point, an engagement was made for the following autumn, subject to my writing to fix the time when I might be able to leave town for the purpose. This being adjusted, the gentleman gave me his card, and they left. Shortly afterwards my friend went also, and on looking for the first time at the card left by the strangers, I was somewhat disappointed to find that though it contained the name of Mr and Mrs Kirkbeck, there was no address. I tried to find it by looking at

the Court Guide, but it contained no such name, so I put the card in my writing-desk, and forgot for a time the entire transaction.

Autumn came, and with it a series of engagements I had made in the north of England. Towards the end of September 1858, I was one of a dinner-party at a country-house on the confines of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. Being a stranger to the family, it was by a mere accident that I was at the house at all. I had arranged to pass a day and a night with a friend in the neighbourhood, who was intimate at the house, and had received an invita-

tion, and the dinner occurring on the evening in question, I had been asked to accompany him. The party was a numerous one, and as the meal approached its termination, and was about to subside into the dessert, the conversation became general. I should here mention that my hearing is defective; at some times more so than at others, and on this particular evening I was extra deaf—so much so, that the conversation only reached me in the form of a continued din. At one instant, however, I heard a word distinctly pronounced, though it was uttered by a person at a considerable

distance from me, and that word was —Kirkbeck. In the business of the London season I had forgotten all about the visitors of the spring, who had left their card without the address. The word reaching me under such circumstances arrested my attention, and immediately recalled the transaction to my remembrance. On the first opportunity that offered, I asked a person whom I was conversing with if a family of the name in question was resident in the neighbourhood. I was told, in reply, that a Mr Kirkbeck lived at A——, at the farther end of the county. The next morning I wrote

to this person, saying that I believed he called at my studio in the spring, and had made an arrangement with me, which I was prevented fulfilling by there being no address on his card; furthermore, that I should shortly be in his neighbourhood on my return from the north, but should I be mistaken in addressing him, I begged he would not trouble himself to reply to my note. I gave as my address, The Post-office, York. On applying there three days afterwards, I received a note from Mr Kirkbeck, stating that he was very glad he had heard from me, and that if I would call on my

return, he would arrange about the pictures; he also told me to write a day before I proposed coming, that he might not otherwise engage himself. It was ultimately arranged that I should go to his house the succeeding Saturday, stay till Monday morning, transact afterwards what matters I had to attend to in London, and return in a fortnight to execute the commissions.

The day having arrived for my visit, directly after breakfast I took my place in the morning train from York to London. The train would stop at Doncaster, and after that at Retford junction, where I should have to get out in order

to take the line through Lincoln to A——. The day was cold, wet, foggy, and in every way as disagreeable as I have ever known a day to be in an English October. The carriage in which I was seated had no other occupant than myself, but at Doncaster a lady got in. My place was back to the engine and next to the door. As that is considered the ladies' seat, I offered it to her; she, however, very graciously declined it, and took the corner opposite, saying, in a very agreeable voice, that she liked to feel the breeze on her cheek. The next few minutes were occupied in locating herself. There was the cloak

to be spread under her, the skirts of the dress to be arranged, the gloves to be tightened, and such other trifling arrangements of plumage as ladies are wont to make before settling themselves comfortably at church or elsewhere, the last and most important being the placing back over her hat the veil that concealed her features. I could then see that the lady was young, certainly not more than two or three-and-twenty; but being moderately tall, rather robust in make, and decided in expression, she might have been two or three years younger. I suppose that her complexion would be termed a medium one; her

hair being of a bright brown, or auburn, while her eyes and rather decidedly marked eyebrows were nearly black. The colour of her cheek was of that pale transparent hue that sets off to such advantage large expressive eyes, and an equable firm expression of mouth. On the whole, the ensemble was rather handsome than beautiful, her expression having that agreeable depth and harmony about it that rendered her face and features, though not strictly regular, infinitely more attractive than if they had been modelled upon the strictest rules of symmetry.

It is no small advantage on a wet

day and a dull long journey to have an agreeable companion; one who can converse, and whose conversation has sufficient substance in it to make one forget the length and the dreariness of the journey. In this respect I had no deficiency to complain of, the lady being decidedly and agreeably conversational. When she had settled herself to her satisfaction, she asked to be allowed to look at my Bradshaw, and not being a proficient in that difficult work, she requested my aid in ascertaining at what time the train passed through Retford again on its way back from London to York. The conversation turned after-

wards on general topics, and, somewhat to my surprise, she led it into such particular subjects as I might be supposed to be more especially familiar with; indeed, I could not avoid remarking that her entire manner, while it was anything but forward, was that of one who had either known me personally or by report. There was in her manner a kind of confidential reliance when she listened to me, that is not usually accorded to a stranger, and sometimes she actually seemed to refer to different circumstances with which I had been connected in times past. After about three-quarters of an hour's conversation

the train arrived at Retford, where I was to change carriages. On my alighting and wishing her good morning, she made a slight movement of the hand, as if she meant me to shake it, and on my doing so she said, by way of adieu, "I dare say we shall meet again;" to which I replied, "I hope that we shall all meet again," and so parted, she going on the line towards London, and I through Lincolnshire to A——. The remainder of the journey was cold, wet, and dreary. I missed the agreeable conversation, and tried to supply its place with a book I had brought with me from York, and the *Times* newspaper, which I had pro-

cured at Retford. But the most disagreeable journey comes to an end at last, and half-past five in the evening found me at the termination of mine. A carriage was waiting for me at the station, where Mr Kirkbeck was also expected by the same train, but as he did not appear, it was concluded he would come by the next—half an hour later; accordingly, the carriage drove away with myself only.

The family being from home at the moment, and the dinner hour being seven, I went at once to my room to unpack and to dress; having completed these operations, I descended to the

drawing-room. It probably wanted some time to the dinner hour, as the lamps were not lighted, but in their place a large blazing fire threw a flood of light into every corner of the room, and more especially over a lady who, dressed in deep black, was standing by the chimney-piece warming a very handsome foot on the edge of the fender. Her face being turned away from the door by which I had entered, I did not at first see her features; on my advancing into the middle of the room, however, the foot was immediately withdrawn, and she turned round to accost me, when, to my profound astonishment, I perceived

that it was none other than my companion in the railway carriage. She betrayed no surprise at seeing me; on the contrary, with one of those agreeable joyous expressions that make the plainest woman appear beautiful, she accosted me with, "I said we should meet again."

My bewilderment at the moment almost deprived me of utterance. I knew of no railway or other means by which she could have come. I had certainly left her in a London train, and had seen it start, and the only conceivable way in which she could have come was by going on to Peterborough,

and then returning by a branch to A——, a circuit of about ninety miles. As soon as my surprise enabled me to speak, I said that I wished I had come by the same conveyance as herself.

"That would have been rather difficult," she rejoined.

At this moment the servant came with the lamps, and informed me that his master had just arrived, and would be down in a few minutes.

The lady took up a book containing some engravings, and having singled one out (a portrait of Lady ——), asked me to look at it well and tell her whether I thought it like her.

I was engaged trying to get up an opinion, when Mr and Mrs Kirkbeck entered, and shaking me heartily by the hand, apologised for not being at home to receive me; the gentleman ending by requesting me to take Mrs Kirkbeck in to dinner.

The lady of the house having taken my arm, we marched on. I certainly hesitated a moment to allow Mr Kirkbeck to pass on first with the mysterious lady in black, but Mrs Kirkbeck not seeming to understand it we passed on at once. The dinner-party consisting of us four only, we fell into our respective places at the table without difficulty, the

mistress and master of the house at the top and bottom, the lady in black and myself on each side. The dinner passed much as is usual on such occasions. I, having to play the guest, directed my conversation principally, if not exclusively to my host and hostess, and I cannot call to mind that I or any one else once addressed the lady opposite. Seeing this, and remembering something that looked like a slight want of attention to her on coming into the dining-room, I at once concluded that she was the governess. I observed, however, that she made an excellent dinner; she seemed to appreciate both the beef and the tart,

as well as a glass of claret afterwards; probably she had had no luncheon, or the journey had given her an appetite.

The dinner ended, the ladies retired, and after the usual port, Mr Kirkbeck and I joined them in the drawing-room. By this time, however, a much larger party had assembled. Brothers and sisters-in-law had come in from their residences in the neighbourhood, and several children, with Miss Hardwick, their governess, were also introduced to me. I saw at once that my supposition as to the lady in black being the governess was incorrect. After passing the time necessarily occupied in compliment-

ing the children, and saying something to the different persons to whom I was introduced, I found myself again engaged in conversation with the lady of the railway carriage, and as the topic of the evening had referred principally to portrait-painting, she continued the subject.

"Do you think you could paint my portrait?" the lady inquired.

"Yes, I think I could, if I had the opportunity."

"Now, look at my face well; do you think you should recollect my features?"

"Yes, I am sure I should never forget your features."

"Of course I might have expected

you to say that; but do you think you could do me from recollection?"

"Well, if it be necessary, I will try; but can't you give me any sittings?"

"No, quite impossible; it could not be. It is said that the print I showed to you before dinner is like me; do you think so?"

"Not much," I replied; "it has not your expression. If you can give me only one sitting, it would be better than none."

"No; I don't see how it could be."

The evening being by this time rather far advanced, and the chamber candles being brought in, on the plea of being

rather tired, she shook me heartily by the hand, and wished me good night. My mysterious acquaintance caused me no small pondering during the night. I had never been introduced to her, I had not seen her speak to any one during the entire evening, not even to wish them good night—how she got across the country was an inexplicable mystery. Then why did she wish me to paint her from memory, and why could she not give me even one sitting? Finding the difficulties of a solution to these questions rather increased upon me, I made up my mind to defer further consideration of them till break-

fast-time, when I supposed the matter would receive some elucidation.

The breakfast now came, but with it no lady in black. The breakfast over, we went to church, came home to luncheon, and so on through the day, but still no lady, neither any reference to her. I then concluded that she must be some relative, who had gone away early in the morning to visit another member of the family living close by. I was much puzzled, however, by no reference whatever being made to her, and finding no opportunity of leading any part of my conversation with the family towards the subject, I went to

bed the second night more puzzled than ever. On the servant coming in in the morning, I ventured to ask him the name of the lady who dined at the table on the Saturday evening, to which he answered:

"A lady, sir? No lady, only Mrs Kirkbeck, sir."

"Yes, the lady that sat opposite me dressed in black?"

"Perhaps Miss Hardwick, the governess, sir?"

"No, not Miss Hardwick; she came down afterwards."

"No lady as I see, sir."

"O dear me, yes, the lady dressed in

black that was in the drawing-room when I arrived, before Mr Kirkbeck came home?"

The man looked at me with surprise as if he doubted my sanity, and only answered, "I never see any lady, sir," and then left.

The mystery now appeared more impenetrable than ever—I thought it over in every possible aspect, but could come to no conclusion upon it. Breakfast was early that morning, in order to allow of my catching the morning train to London. The same cause also slightly hurried us, and allowed no time for conversation beyond that

having direct reference to the business that brought me there; so, after arranging to return to paint the portraits on that day three weeks, I made my adieus, and took my departure for town.

It is only necessary for me to refer to my second visit to that house, in order to state that I was assured most positively, both by Mr and Mrs Kirkbeck, that no fourth person dined at the table on the Saturday evening in question. Their recollection was clear on the subject, as they had debated whether they should ask Miss Hardwick, the governess, to take the vacant seat, but had decided not to do so;

neither could they recall to mind any such person as I described in the whole circle of their acquaintance.

Some weeks passed. It was close upon Christmas. The light of a short winter day was drawing to a close, and I was seated at my table, writing letters for the evening post. My back was towards the folding-doors leading into the room in which my visitors usually waited. I had been engaged some minutes in writing, when without hearing or seeing anything, I became aware that a person had come through the folding-doors, and was then standing beside me. I turned, and beheld the

lady of the railway carriage. I suppose that my manner indicated that I was somewhat startled, as the lady, after the usual salutation, said, "Pardon me for disturbing you. You did not hear me come in." Her manner, though it was more quiet and subdued than I had known it before, was hardly to be termed grave, still less sorrowful. There was a change, but it was that kind of change only which may often be observed from the frank impulsiveness of an intelligent young lady, to the composure and self-possession of that same young lady when she is either betrothed or has recently become a matron. She

asked me whether I had made any attempt at a likeness of her. I was obliged to confess that I had not. She regretted it much, as she wished one for her father. She had brought an engraving (a portrait of Lady M. A.) with her that she thought would assist me. It was like the one she had asked my opinion upon at the house in Lincolnshire. It had always been considered very like her, and she would leave it with me. Then (putting her hand impressively on my arm) she added, "She really would be most thankful and grateful to me if I would do it" (and if I recollect rightly, she

added), "*as much depended on it.*" Seeing she was so much in earnest, I took up my sketch-book, and by the dim light that was still remaining began to make a rapid pencil sketch of her. On observing my doing so, however, instead of giving me what assistance she was able, she turned away under pretence of looking at the pictures around the room, occasionally passing from one to another so as to enable me to catch a momentary glimpse of her features. In this manner I made two hurried but rather expressive sketches of her, which being all that the declining light would allow me to do, I shut my book, and

she prepared to leave. This time, instead of the usual "Good morning," she wished me an impressively pronounced "Good-bye," firmly holding rather than shaking my hand while she said it. I accompanied her to the door, outside of which she seemed rather to fade into the darkness than to pass through it. But I referred this impression to my own fancy.

I immediately inquired of the servant why she had not announced the visitor to me. She stated that she was not aware there had been one, and that any one who had entered must have done so when she had left the street door open

about half an hour previously, while she went across the road for a moment.

Soon after this occurred I had to fulfil an engagement at a house near Bosworth Field, in Leicestershire. I left town on a Friday, having sent some pictures, that were too large to take with me, by the luggage train a week previously, in order that they might be at the house on my arrival, and occasion me no loss of time in waiting for them. On getting to the house, however, I found that they had not been heard of, and on inquiring at the station, it was stated that a case similar to the one I described had passed through and gone on to Leicester, where

it probably still was. It being Friday, and past the hour for the post, there was no possibility of getting a letter to Leicester before Monday morning, as the luggage office would be closed there on Sunday; consequently I could in no case expect the arrival of the pictures before the succeeding Tuesday or Wednesday. The loss of three days would be a serious one; therefore, to avoid it, I suggested to my host that I should leave immediately to transact some business in South Staffordshire, as I should be obliged to attend to it before my return to town, and if I could see about it in the vacant interval thus thrown

upon my hands, it would be saving me the same amount of time after my visit to his house was concluded. This arrangement meeting with his ready assent, I hastened to the Atherstone station on the Trent Valley Railway. By reference to Bradshaw, I find that my route lay through L——, where I was to change carriages, to S——, in Staffordshire. I was just in time for the train that would put me down at L—— at eight in the evening, and a train was announced to start from L—— for S—— at ten minutes after eight, answering, as I concluded, to the train in which I was about to travel. I there-

fore saw no reason to doubt but that I should get to my journey's end the same night; but on my arriving at L—— I found my plans entirely frustrated. The train arrived punctually, and I got out intending to wait on the platform for the arrival of the carriages for the other line. I found, however, that though the two lines crossed at L——, they did not communicate with each other, the L—— station on the Trent Valley line being on one side of the town, and the L—— station on the South Staffordshire line on the other. I also found that there was not time to get to the other station so as to catch the train the

same evening; indeed, the train had just that moment passed on a lower level beneath my feet, and to get to the other side of the town, where it would stop for two minutes only, was out of the question. There was, therefore, nothing for it but to put up at the Swan Hotel for the night. I have an especial dislike to passing an evening at an hotel in a country town. Dinner at such places I never take, as I had rather go without than have such as I am likely to get. Books are never to to be had, the country newspapers do not interest me. The *Times* I have spelt through on my journey. The

society I am likely to meet have few ideas in common with myself. Under such circumstances, I usually resort to a meat tea to while away the time, and when that is over, occupy myself in writing letters.

This was the first time I had been in L——, and while waiting for the tea, it occurred to me how, on two occasions within the past six months, I had been on the point of coming to that very place, at one time to execute a small commission for an old acquaintance, resident there, and another to get the materials for a picture I proposed painting of an incident in the early life of Dr Johnson.

I should have come on each of these occasions had not other arrangements diverted my purpose and caused me to postpone the journey indefinitely. The thought, however, would occur to me, "How strange! Here I am at L—— by no intention of my own, though I have twice tried to get here and been balked." When I had done tea, I thought I might as well write to an acquaintance I had known some years previously, and who lived in the Cathedral-close, asking him to come and pass an hour or two with me. Accordingly I rang for the waitress and asked:

"Does Mr Lute live in L——?"

"Yes, sir."

"Cathedral-close?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can I send a note to him?"

"Yes, sir."

I wrote the note, saying where I was, and asking if he would come for an hour or two and talk over old matters. The note was taken; in about twenty minutes a person of gentlemanly appearance, and what might be termed the advanced middle age, entered the room with my note in his hand, saying that I had sent him a letter, he presumed, by mistake, as he did not know my name. Seeing, instantly, that he was not the person I

intended to write to, I apologised, and asked whether there was not another Mr Lute living in L——?

"No, there was none other."

"Certainly," I rejoined, "my friend must have given me his right address, for I had written to him on other occasions here. He was a fair young man, he succeeded to an estate in consequence of his uncle having been killed while hunting with the Quorn hounds, and he married, about two years since, a lady of the name of Fairbairn."

The stranger very composedly replied, "You are speaking of Mr Clyne;

he did live in the Cathedral-close, but he has now gone away."

The stranger was right, and in my surprise I exclaimed:

"Oh dear, to be sure, that is the name; what could have made me address you instead? I really beg your pardon; my writing to you, and unconsciously guessing your name, is one of the most extraordinary and unaccountable things I ever did. Pray pardon me."

He continued very quietly,

"There is no need of apology; it happens that you are the very person I most wished to see. You are a painter, and I want you to paint a portrait of my

daughter; can you come to my house immediately for the purpose?"

I was rather surprised at finding myself known by him, and the turn matters had taken being so entirely unexpected, I did not at the moment feel inclined to undertake the business; I therefore explained how I was situate, stating that I had only the next day and Monday at my disposal. He, however, pressed me so earnestly, that I arranged to do what I could for him in those two days; and having put up my baggage and arranged other matters, I accompanied him to his house. During the walk home, he scarcely spoke a word, but his taciturnity

seemed only a continuance of his quiet composure at the inn. On our arrival he introduced me to his daughter Maria, and then left the room. Maria Lute was a fair and a decidedly handsome girl of about fifteen; her manner was, however, in advance of her years, and evinced that self-possession, and, in the favourable sense of the term, that womanliness, that is only seen at such an early age in girls that have been left motherless, or from other causes thrown much on their own resources.

She had evidently not been informed of the purpose of my coming, and only knew that I was to stay there for the

night; she therefore excused herself for a few moments, that she might give the requisite directions to the servants as to preparing my room. When she returned, she told me that I should not see her father again that evening, the state of his health having obliged him to retire for the night; but she hoped I should be able to see him some time on the morrow. In the meantime, she hoped I would make myself quite at home, and call for anything I wanted. She herself was sitting in the drawing-room, but perhaps I should like to smoke and take something; if so, there was a fire in the house-keeper's room, and she

would come and sit with me, as she expected the medical attendant every minute, and he would probably stay to smoke and take something. As the little lady seemed to recommend this course, I readily complied. I did not smoke or take anything, but sat down by the fire, when she immediately joined me. She conversed well and readily, and with a command of language singular in a person so young. Without being disagreeably inquisitive, or putting any question to me, she seemed desirous of learning the business that had brought me to the house. I told her that her father wished me to paint

either her portrait or that of a sister of hers, if she had one.

She remained silent and thoughtful for a moment, and then seemed to comprehend it at once. She told me that a sister of hers, an only one, to whom her father was devotedly attached, died near four months previously; that her father had never yet recovered from the shock of her death. He had often expressed the most earnest wish for a portrait of her, indeed, it was his one thought; and she hoped, if something of the kind could be done, it would improve his health. Here she hesitated, stammered, and burst into tears. After a while she

continued: "It is no use hiding from you what you must very soon be aware of. Papa is insane—he has been so ever since dear Caroline was buried. He says he is always seeing dear Caroline, and he is subject to fearful delusions. The doctor says he cannot tell how much worse he may be, and that everything dangerous, like knives or razors, is to be kept out of his reach. It was necessary you should not see him again this evening, as he was unable to converse properly, and I fear the same may be the case to-morrow; but perhaps you can stay over Sunday, and I may be able to assist you in doing

what he wishes." I asked whether they nad any materials for making a likeness —a photograph, a sketch, or anything else for me to go from. "No, they had nothing." "Could she describe her clearly?" She thought she could; and there was a print that was very much like her, but she had mislaid it. I mentioned, that with such disadvantages, and in such an absence of materials, I did not anticipate a satisfactory result. I had painted portraits under such circumstances, but their success much depended upon the powers of description of the persons who were to assist me by their recollection; in some in-

stances I had attained a certain amount of success, but in most the result was quite a failure. The medical attendant came, but I did not see him. I learnt, however, that he ordered a strict watch to be kept on his patient till he came again the next morning. Seeing the state of things, and how much the little lady had to attend to, I retired early to bed. The next morning I heard that her father was decidedly better; he had inquired earnestly, on waking, whether I was really in the house, and at breakfast-time he sent down to say that he hoped nothing would prevent my making an attempt at the portrait

immediately, and he expected to be able to see me in the course of the day.

Directly after breakfast I set to work, aided by such description as the sister could give me. I tried again and again, but without success, or, indeed, the least prospect of it. The features, I was told, were separately like, but the expression was not. I toiled on the greater part of the day with no better result. The different studies I made were taken up to the invalid, but the same answer was always returned—no resemblance. I had exerted myself to the utmost, and, in fact, was not a little fatigued by so

doing—a circumstance that the little lady evidently noticed, as she expressed herself most grateful for the interest she could see I took in the matter, and referred the unsuccessful result entirely to her want of powers of description. She also said it was so provoking! she had a print—a portrait of a lady, that was so like, but it had gone—she had missed it from her book for three weeks past. It was the more disappointing, as she was sure it would have been of such great assistance, I asked if she could tell me who the print was of, as, if I knew, I could easily procure one in London. She answered, Lady M. A. Imme-

diately the name was uttered the whole scene of the lady of the railway carriage presented itself to me. I had my sketch-book in my portmanteau upstairs, and, by a fortunate chance, fixed in it was the print in question, with the two pencil sketches. I instantly brought them down, and showed them to Maria Lute. She looked at them for a moment, turned her eyes full upon me, and said slowly, and with something like fear in her manner, "Where did you get these?" Then quicker, and without waiting for my answer, "Let me take them instantly to papa." She was away ten minutes, or more; when she returned,

her father came with her. He did not wait for salutations, but said, in a tone and manner I had not observed in him before, "I was right all the time; it was you that I saw with her, and these sketches are from her, and from no one else. I value them more than all my possessions, except this dear child." The daughter also assured me that the print I had brought to the house must be the one taken from the book about three weeks before, in proof of which she pointed out to me the gum marks at the back, which exactly corresponded with those left on the blank leaf. From the moment the father saw

these sketches, his mental health returned.

I was not allowed to touch either of the pencil drawings in the sketch-book, as it was feared I might injure them; but an oil picture from them was commenced immediately, the father sitting by me hour after hour, directing my touches, conversing rationally, and indeed cheerfully, while he did so. He avoided direct reference to his delusions, but from time to time led the conversation to the manner in which I had originally obtained the sketches. The doctor came in the evening, and, after extolling the particular treatment he

had adopted, pronounced his patient decidedly, and he believed permanently, improved.

The next day being Sunday, we all went to church. The father, for the first time since his bereavement. During a walk which he took with me after luncheon, he again approached the subject of the sketches, and after some seeming hesitation as to whether he should confide in me or not, said, "Your writing to me by name, from the inn at L——, was one of those inexplicable circumstances that I suppose it is impossible to clear up. I knew you, however, directly I saw you; when those about me con-

sidered that my intellect was disordered, and that I spoke incoherently, it was only because I saw things that they did not. Since her death, I know, with a certainty that nothing will ever disturb, that at different times I have been in the actual and visible presence of my dear daughter that is gone—oftener, indeed, just after her death than latterly. Of the many times that this has occurred, I distinctly remember once seeing her in a railway carriage, speaking to a person seated opposite; who that person was I could not ascertain, as my position seemed to be immediately behind him. I next saw her at a dinner-

table, with others, and amongst those others, unquestionably, I saw yourself. I afterwards learnt that at that time I was considered to be in one of my longest and most violent paroxysms, as I continued to see her speaking to you, in the midst of a large assembly, for some hours. Again I saw her, standing by your side, while you were engaged in either writing or drawing. I saw her once again afterwards, but the next time I saw yourself was in the inn parlour."

The picture was proceeded with the next day, and on the day after the face was completed, and I after-

wards brought it with me to London to finish.

I have often seen Mr L. since that period; his health is perfectly re-established, and his manner and conversation are as cheerful as can be expected within a few years of so great a bereavement.

The portrait now hangs in his bedroom, with the print and the two sketches by the side, and written beneath is: "C. L., 13th September 1858, aged 22."

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